

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
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LITTLE GREEN GOD OF AGONY



THE HOME OF ANDREW NEWSOME, SIXTH RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD...

I WAS
IN AN
ACCIDENT.

ACTUALLY
I CAUSED THE
ACCIDENT.

NOT SO
TIGHT, KAT,
PLEASE.

KATHERINE MACDONALD, NEWSOME'S PRIVATE NURSE COULD HAVE POINTED OUT, AS SHE DID AT THE START, THAT THE TENS LOST THEIR EFFICACY IF THEY WEREN'T TIGHT TO THE OUTRAGED NERVES THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO SOOTHE, BUT SHE WAS A FAST LEARNER. SHE LOOSENED THE VELCRO STRAP A LITTLE, THINKING...

SHE HAD HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, AS HAD JENSEN, NEWSOME'S PERSONAL ASSISTANT...

BUT IT WAS THE MAN STANDING NEXT TO JENSEN WHO INTERESTED HER--

THE PILOT
TOLD YOU THERE
WERE THUNDERSTORMS
IN THE OMAHA
AREA.

THE
PILOT TOLD
ME THERE WERE
THUNDERSTORMS
IN THE
AREA.

BUT I TOLD HIM IT
WAS IMPERATIVE
THAT I MAKE THAT
MEETING.

HIS NAME WAS RIDEOUT.

SO FAR RIDEOUT HADN'T SAID A WORD, BUT SHE DIDN'T NEED HER EARS TO KNOW WHAT HE WAS. THE WIFE OF CHARLATAN WAS STRONG ABOUT HIM. IN FIFTEEN YEARS AS A NURSE SPECIALIZING IN PAIN PATIENTS, SHE HAD MET HER SHARE. AT LEAST THIS ONE WASN'T WEARING ANY CRYSTALS.

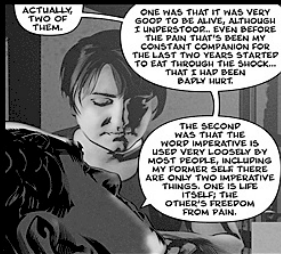


AS I LAY ON THE RUNWAY IN THE RAIN AMONG THE BURNING PIECES OF A FOURTEEN MILLION DOLLAR AIRCRAFT, MOST OF THE CLOTHES TORN OFF MY BODY... THAT'LL HAPPEN WHEN YOU HIT PAVEMENT AND ROLL FIFTY OR SIXTY FEET...



...I HAD A REVELATION.

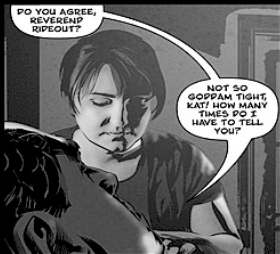




ACTUALLY, TWO OF THEM.

ONE WAS THAT IT WAS VERY GOOD TO BE ALIVE, ALTHOUGH I UNDERSTOOD... EVEN BEFORE THE PAIN THAT'S BEEN MY CONSTANT COMPANION FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS STARTED TO EAT THROUGH THE SHOCK... THAT I HAD BEEN BADLY HURT.

THE SECOND WAS THAT THE WORD IMPERATIVE IS USED VERY LOOSELY BY MOST PEOPLE, INCLUDING MY FORMER SELF. THERE ARE ONLY TWO IMPERATIVE THINGS. ONE IS LIFE ITSELF; THE OTHER'S FREEDOM FROM PAIN.



DO YOU AGREE, REVEREND RIDEOUT?

NOT SO GODDAMN TIGHT, KAT! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU?

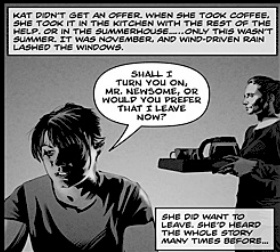


SORRY.

WHY DO I EVEN TRY?

WOULD YOU GENTLEMEN LIKE SOME COFFEE?

MELISSA, THE HOUSEKEEPER...



KAT DIDN'T GET AN OFFER. WHEN SHE TOOK COFFEE, SHE TOOK IT IN THE KITCHEN WITH THE REST OF THE HELP. OR IN THE SUMMERHOUSE... ONLY THIS WASN'T SUMMER. IT WAS NOVEMBER, AND WIND-DRIVEN RAIN LASHED THE WINDOWS.

SHALL I TURN YOU ON, MR. NEWSOME, OR WOULD YOU PREFER THAT I LEAVE NOW?

SHE DID WANT TO LEAVE. SHE'D HEARD THE WHOLE STORY MANY TIMES BEFORE...



THE IMPERATIVE MEETING, THE CRASH, HOW ANDREW NEWSOME HAD BEEN EJECTED FROM THE BURNING PLANE, ABOUT THE BROKEN BONES, CHIPPED SPINE, AND DISLOCATED NECK, MOST OF ALL ABOUT THE TWENTY-FOUR MONTHS OF UNBELIEVED SUFFERING, WHICH HE WOULD SOON GET TO—AND IT BORED HER.



BUT RIDEOUT DIDN'T.

OTHER CHARLATANS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY FOLLOW NOW THAT ALL REPUTABLE RELIEF RESOURCES HAD BEEN EXHAUSTED, BUT RIDEOUT WAS THE FIRST, AND KAT WAS INTERESTED TO SEE HOW THE FARMER-LOOKING FELLOW WOULD GO ABOUT SEPARATING ANDY NEWSOME FROM A LARGE CHUNK OF HIS CASH.

GO AHEAD,
HONEY, TURN
ME ON.

ONCE THE LECHERY MIGHT HAVE BEEN REAL (KAT THOUGHT MELISSA MIGHT HAVE INFORMATION ON THAT SUBJECT), BUT NOW IT WAS JUST A PAIR OF SHAGGY EYEBROWS WORKING ON MUSCLE MEMORY.

PROPERLY ATTACHED, THE TENS UNITS WOULD HAVE SENT A WEAK ELECTRICAL CURRENT INTO NEWSOME'S MUSCLES, A THERAPY THAT SEEMED TO HAVE SOME AMELIORATIVE EFFECTS...ALTHOUGH NO ONE COULD SAY EXACTLY WHY, OR IF THEY WERE ENTIRELY OF THE PLACEBO VARIETY.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, THEY WOULD DO NOTHING FOR NEWSOME TONIGHT. HOOKED UP AS LOOSELY AS THEY WERE, THEY HAD BEEN REDUCED TO THE EQUIVALENT OF JOY-BUZZERS, EXPENSIVE ONES.

SHALL I--?

STAY!
THERAPY!

THE LORD
WOUNDED IN
BATTLE COMMANDS...
AND I OBEY.

HE TOLD THEM ABOUT
AWAKENING IN A CAGE
OF METAL AND MESH.

THERE WERE STEEL GANTRIES CALLED FIXATORS ON BOTH LEGS AND ONE ARM TO IMMOBILIZE JOINTS THAT HAD BEEN REPAIRED WITH "ABOUT A HUNDRED" STEEL PINS (ACTUALLY SEVENTEEN; KAT HAD SEEN THE X-RAYS).

THE FIXATORS WERE ANCHORED IN THE OUTRAGED AND SPLINTERED FEELERS, TIBIAS, FIBULAE, HUMERUS, RADIUS, ULNA. HIS BACK WAS ENCASED IN A KIND OF CHAIN MAIL GIRDLE THAT WENT FROM HIS HIPS TO THE NAPE OF HIS NECK.

HE TALKED ABOUT SLEEPLESS NIGHTS THAT SEEMED TO GO ON NOT FOR HOURS BUT FOR YEARS. HE TALKED ABOUT THE CRUSHING HEADACHES.

HE TOLD THEM ABOUT HOW EVEN WIGGLING HIS TOES CAUSED PAIN ALL THE WAY UP TO HIS JAW, AND THE SHRIEKING ADOXY THAT BIT INTO HIS LEGS WHEN THE DOCTORS INSISTED THAT HE MOVE THEM--FIXATORS AND ALL--SO HE WOULDN'T ENTIRELY LOSE THEIR FUNCTION.

HE TOLD THEM ABOUT THE BEDSORES AND HOW HE BIT BACK HOWLS OF HURT AND OUTRAGE WHEN THE NURSES ATTEMPTED TO ROLL HIM ON HIS SIDE SO THE SORES COULD BE FLUSHED OUT.

THERE HAD BEEN ANOTHER POZEN OPERATIONS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

ACTUALLY, KAT KNEW THERE HAD BEEN FIVE. TWO OF THOSE TO REMOVE THE FIXATORS WHEN THE BONES WERE SUFFICIENTLY HEALED.

UNLESS YOU INCLUDED THE MINOR PROCEDURE TO RESET HIS BROKEN FINGERS, THAT IS THEN YOU COULD SAY THERE WERE SIX, BUT I DON'T CONSIDER SURGICAL STUFF NECESSITATING NO MORE THAN LOCAL ANESTHETIC TO BE "OPERATIONS."

IF THAT WAS THE CASE, SHE'D HAD A DOZEN HERSELF, MOST OF THEM WHILE LISTENING TO MUZAK IN A DENTIST'S CHAIR.

NOW COMES THE PROMISES. THAT COMES NEXT.

THE DOCTORS PROMISED ME THE PAIN WOULD ABATE.

REVEREND RIPEOUT, THOSE WERE FALSE PROMISES.

I HAVE ALMOST NO FLEXION IN MY KNEES AT ALL, AND THE PAIN IN MY HIPS AND BACK IS BEYOND DESCRIPTION.

THE DOCTORS-

-AH! OH! STOP! KAT, STOP!

THE DOCTORS GUILTY OF FALSE PROMISES HAD NOT BEEN GUILTY OF FALSE ADVERTISING: THEY HAD TOLD HIM THE PAIN WAS COMING. KAT HAD BEEN THERE AS A SILENT ONLOOKER DURING SEVERAL OF THOSE CONSULTATIONS.

THEY HAD TOLD HIM HE WOULD SWIM IN PAIN BEFORE THOSE CRUCIAL TENDONS, SHORTENED BY THE ACCIDENT AND FROZEN IN PLACE BY THE FIXATORS, STRETCHED OUT AND ONCE AGAIN BECAME LIMBER.

LET IT GO DOWN! LET IT DOWN, GODDAMMIT!

TEN DEGREES. POSSIBLY TWELVE. WHOOP-DE-DO. SOMETIMES SHE GOT IT ALL THE WAY TO FIFTEEN- AND THE LEFT LEG, WHICH WAS A LITTLE BETTER, TO TWENTY DEGREES OF FLEX-BEFORE HE STARTED HOLLERING LIKE A KID WHO SEES A HYPODERMIC NEEDLE IN A SCHOOL NURSE'S HAND.

HE WOULD HAVE PLENTY OF PAIN BEFORE HE WAS ABLE TO GET THE BEND IN HIS KNEES BACK TO NINETY DEGREES. BEFORE HE WOULD BE ABLE TO SIT IN A CHAIR OR BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A CAR. THAT WAS. THE SAME WAS TRUE OF HIS BACK AND HIS NECK.

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY LED THROUGH THE LAND OF PAIN. THAT WAS ALL.

OR SO SHE THOUGHT...

THESE WERE TRUE PROMISES
ANDREW NEWSOME HAD
CHOSEN NOT TO HEAR.

IT WAS HIS BELIEF—NEVER STATED
BALDLY, IN WORDS OF ONE SYLLABLE,
BUT UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE STARS
HE STEERED BY—THAT THE SIXTH-
RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD SHOULD
NOT HAVE TO VISIT THE LAND OF PAIN
UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ONLY THE
COSTA DEL SOL OF FULL RECOVERY.
BLAMING THE DOCTORS FOLLOWED AS
DAY FOLLOWS NIGHT.

AND OF COURSE HE BLAMED
FATE. THINGS LIKE THIS
WERE NOT SUPPOSED TO
HAPPEN TO GUYS LIKE HIM.

NO ONE'S
IN THE MOOD
FOR BAKED
GOODS,
LISSA.

HERE WAS ANOTHER THING KAT MACDONALD HAD
DISCOVERED ABOUT THE MEGA-RICH, THOSE DOLLAR-
BABIES WHO HAD AMASSED ASSETS BEYOND ORDINARY
COMPREHENSION: THEY FELT VERY CONFIDENT ABOUT
SPEAKING FOR EVERYONE IN THE ROOM.

SHE HAD TO BE AT LEAST FORTY-
FIVE, BUT LOOKED YOUNGER. SHE
WASN'T SEXY...NOTHING SO VULGAR.

RATHER THERE WAS AN
ICE-QUEEN GLAMOUR ABOUT
HER THAT MADE KAT THINK
OF INGRID BERGMAN.

ICY OR NOT, KAT SUPPOSED MEN
WOULD WONDER HOW THAT CHESTNUT
HAIR WOULD LOOK FREED FROM ITS
CLIPS, AND LYING ALL MUSSUED UP ON A
PILLOW.

HOW HER CORAL
LIPSTICK WOULD LOOK
SNEARED ON HER TEETH
AND UP ONE CHEEK.

KAT, WHO CONSIDERED
HERSELF DUMPY, TOLD
HERSELF AT LEAST ONCE
A DAY THAT SHE WASN'T
JEALOUS OF THAT
SMOOTH, COOL FACE, OR
THAT HEART-SHAPED
BOTTOM.

"IF YOU WERE ANOTHER
PATIENT, I'D TELL YOU THE
FACTS OF LIFE." SHE
THOUGHT, "I'D TELL YOU
TO STOP LOOKING FOR
SHORTCUTS, BECAUSE
THERE ARE NONE, NOT
EVEN FOR THE SIXTH-
RICHEST MAN IN THE
WORLD."

"YOU HAVE ME—I'D HELP
YOU IF YOU'D LET ME—BUT
AS LONG AS YOU KEEP
LOOKING FOR A WAY TO
PAY YOURSELF OUT OF
THE SHIT."

"...YOU'RE ON
YOUR OWN."

SHE WAITED FOR HIM TO SCREAM AT HER TO STOP, AND SHE WOULD, BECAUSE FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS A WEEK ADDED UP TO A COOL QUARTER-MIL A YEAR. DID HE KNOW THAT PART OF WHAT HE WAS BUYING WAS HER SILENCE? NOW COULD HE NOT?

NOW TELL THEM ABOUT THE DOCTORS. GENEVA, LONDON, MADRID, MEXICO CITY, ET CETERA, ET CETERA.

I'VE BEEN TO DOCTORS ALL OVER THE WORLD

TELECONFERENCING WOULD BE THE EASIER WAY TO GO, GIVEN MY CONDITION, BUT OF COURSE THAT DOESN'T CUT IT IN CASES LIKE MINE. SO I'VE GONE IN PERSON, IN SPITE OF THE PAIN IT CAUSES ME.

WE'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE. HAVEN'T WE, KAT?

INDEED WE HAVE.

KAT CONTINUES TO BEND THE LEG.

ON WHICH HE WOULD HAVE BEEN WALKING BY NOW IF HE WEREN'T SUCH A CHILD ABOUT THE PAIN. SUCH A SPOILED BABY. ON CRUTCHES, YES, BUT WALKING.

AND IN ANOTHER YEAR HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO THROW THE CRUTCHES AWAY. ONLY IN ANOTHER YEAR HE WOULD STILL BE HERE IN THIS TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLAR STATE-OF-THE-ART HOSPITAL BED.

AND SHE WOULD STILL BE WITH HIM, STILL TAKING HIS HUSH-MONEY. HOW MUCH WOULD BE ENOUGH? TWO MILLION? SHE TOLD HERSELF THAT NOW, BUT SHE'D TOLD HERSELF HALF A MILLION WOULD BE ENOUGH NOT SO LONG AGO, AND HAD SINCE MOVED THE GOALPOSTS.

MONEY WAS WRETCHED THAT WAY.

WE'VE SEEN SPECIALISTS IN MEXICO, GENEVA, LONDON, ROME, PARIS...WHERE ELSE, KAT?

VIENNA.

AND SAN FRANCISCO, OF COURSE.

DOCTOR THERE TOLD ME I WAS MANUFACTURING MY OWN PAIN.

"TO KEEP FROM DOING THE HARD WORK OF REHABILITATION?"

BUT HE WAS A PAKI. AND A QUEER. A QUEER PAKI, HOW'S THAT FOR A COMBO? I'M NOT OFFENDING YOU, AM I, REVEREND?



GOOR, GOOR
STOR KAT, THAT'S
ENOUGH.

A LITTLE
MORE.

STOR, I SAIR
THAT'S ALL I
CAN TAKE.

HE OFTEN TOLD PEOPLE
BOTH OF HIS ARMS HAD
ALSO BEEN BROKEN, BUT
THIS WASN'T TRUE.

THE LEFT ONE HAD ONLY BEEN SPRAINED. HE ALSO TOLD
PEOPLE HE WAS LUCKY NOT TO BE IN A WHEELCHAIR,
BUT THE ALL-THE-BELLS-AND-WHISTLES HOSPITAL BED
SUGGESTED STRONGLY THAT THIS WAS LUCK HE HAD
NO INTENTION OF CAPITALIZING ON IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

THE
CONSENSUS IS
THAT I'M SUFFERING
FROM NEUROPATHIC
PAIN.

AND COWARDICE.

IT'S A
GREAT
MYSTERY.

ALSO A GOOD EXCUSE.

PERHAPS
INSOLUBLE.

ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU DON'T TRY.

THE ALL-THE-BELLS-AND-WHISTLES HOSPITAL BED
WAS HIS WHEELCHAIR. IT ROLLED. HE HAD RIDDEN
ALL OVER THE WORLD IN IT.

NEUROPATHIC PAIN. IT'S A GREAT
MYSTERY. PERHAPS INSOLUBLE.
THE DRUGS NO LONGER WORK.



THE DRUGS NO
LONGER WORK AND THE
DOCTORS CAN'T HELP ME.
THAT'S WHY I'VE BROUGHT
YOU HERE, REVEREND RIDEOUT.
YOUR REFERENCES IN THE
MATTER OF...ER...

...HEALING...
...ARE...

...VERY
STRONG.

HE HAD CHARISMA OF THAT THERE
COULD BE NO DOUBT THE CHARLATANS
OF THE WORLD COULDN'T GET ALONG
WITHOUT IT.

I DON'T
HEAL.

NOT I SENT A TEAM OF
INVESTIGATORS, AND THEY
ASSURE ME THAT IN
MANY CASES—

I BEG YOUR
PARDON.

I EXPEL.

BUT SHE HADN'T REALIZED HOW MUCH OR
HOW STRONG IT WAS UNTIL HE GOT TO
HIS FEET AND TOWERED OVER THEM.

I EXTERMINATE THE PEST FROM THE WOUNDED BODY IT'S FEEPING ON, JUST AS A BUG EXTERMINATOR WOULD EXTERMINATE PESTS, TERMITES, FOR INSTANCE, FEEPING ON A HOUSE.

YOU'VE BEEN POSSESSED, SIR.

NOW I HAVE HEARD ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING, BUT NEWSOME IS FASCINATED LIKE A KID WATCHING A THREE-CARP MONTE EXPERT ON A STREET CORNER.

YES, THAT'S WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT. THE NIGHTS ARE... VERY LONG.

YOU BET.

IN THESE UNFORTUNATE PAIN OPENS THE WAY FOR A PEMON GOR IT'S SMALL, BUT PANGEROUS. IT FEEPS ON A SPECIAL KIND OF HURT PRODUCED ONLY BY CERTAIN SPECIAL PEOPLE.

GENIUS. HE'S GOING TO LOVE THAT.

ONCE THE GOD FINPS ITS WAY IN, PAIN BECOMES AGONY.

I SAY THAT THERE ARE MANY GOPS.

THE FACT THAT OUR LORD, THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS, RULES THEM ALL - AND ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT WILL DESTROY THEM ALL - DOES NOT CHANGE THAT.

THESE LITTLE GOPS HAVE BEEN WORSHIPPED BY PEOPLE BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN. THEY HAVE THEIR POWERS, AND OUR GOP SOMETIMES ALLOWS THOSE POWERS TO BE EXERCISED.

AS A TEST.

AS A TEST OF OUR STRENGTH AND FAITH.

YOU ARE A MAN OF MUCH STRENGTH AND LITTLE FAITH.

I DON'T HAVE MUCH IN THE WAY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH, THAT'S TRUE, BUT I HAVE FAITH IN MYSELF. I ALSO HAVE FAITH IN MONEY. HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT?

EVERY MAN OR WOMAN WHO SUFFERS PAIN IS POSSESSED, OF COURSE, BUT IN SOME UNFORTUNATE PEOPLE - YOU ARE ONE - THE PROBLEM GOES DEEPER.

THE POSSESSION ISN'T A TRANSIENT THING, BUT A PERMANENT CONDITION.

ONE THAT WORSENS. DOCTORS DON'T BELIEVE, BECAUSE THEY ARE MEN OF SCIENCE. BUT YOU BELIEVE, DON'T YOU? BECAUSE YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S SUFFERING.

IT FEEPS JUST AS TERMITES FEEP ON WOOD AND IT WILL EAT UNTIL YOU ARE ALL USED UP THEN IT WILL CAST YOU ASIDE, SIR, AND MOVE ON.

WHAT GOD WOULD THAT BE? CERTAINLY NOT THE ONE YOU PREACH ABOUT.

THAT ONE IS THE GOD OF LOVE. OR SO I GREW UP BELIEVING.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT REV?

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU PAY TO BE FREE OF YOUR PAIN, SIR?

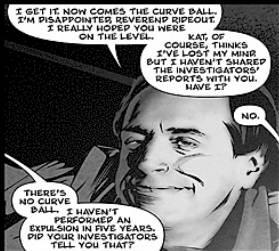
TEN MILLION DOLLARS.

BUT I DIDN'T GET TO WHERE I AM BY BEING A SUCKER. IF YOU DO WHATEVER IT IS YOU DO - EXPELLING, EXTERMINATING, EXORCISING, CALL IT WHAT YOU WANT - YOU GET THE MONEY IN CASH, IF YOU DON'T MIND SPENDING THE NIGHT.

FAIL, AND YOU GET NOTHING.

EXCEPT YOUR FIRST AND ONLY ROUND-TRIP ON A PRIVATE JET.

FOR THAT THERE WILL BE NO CHARGE. AFTER ALL, I REACHED OUT TO YOU.







NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT. DO YOU WANT EVERYONE TO LEAVE?

I WILL NEED ASSISTANCE.

MAGICIANS ALWAYS DO. IT'S PART OF THE SHOW.



MR. JENSEN THERE, I THINK HE LOOKS STRONG AND QUICK.

HE'S BOTH.

PLAYED FOOTBALL IN COLLEGE. RUNNING BACK. HASN'T LOST A STEP SINCE.

WELL... A FEW.



ANSWER A QUESTION FOR ME, SIR. WHAT COLOR IS YOUR PAIN?

GREEN. MY PAIN IS GREEN.



AND WHERE IS IT?

EVERYWHERE.



YES, IT LIKES TO GIVE THAT IMPRESSION, BUT IT'S NOT SO.

CLOSE YOUR EYES, SIR, AND CONCENTRATE.

LOOK FOR THE PAIN. LOOK PAST THE FALSE SHOUTS IT GIVES, IGNORE THE CHEAP VENTRILOQUISM, AND LOCATE IT.

YOU CAN DO THIS. YOU MUST DO IT...

...IF WE'RE TO HAVE ANY SUCCESS.

FOR A SPACE OF NINETY SECONDS THERE WAS NO SOUND BUT THE WIND AND THE RAIN SPATTERING AGAINST THE WINDOWS LIKE HANDFULS OF FINE GRAVEL.

KAT'S WATCH WAS THE OLD-FASHIONED WIND-UP KIND, A NURSING SCHOOL GRADUATION PRESENT FROM HER FATHER MANY YEARS AGO, AND WHEN THE WIND LULLED, THE ROOM WAS QUIET ENOUGH FOR HER TO HEAR ITS SELF-IMPORTANT TICKING.

IT'S IN MY CHEST, HIGH IN MY CHEST, OR AT THE BOTTOM OF MY THROAT, JUST BELOW THE WINDPIPE.

CAN YOU SEE IT? CONCENTRATE!

I SEE IT. IT'S PULSING IN TIME TO MY HEARTBEAT.

IT'S NASTY.

IS IT A BALL? IT IS, ISN'T IT? A GREEN BALL.

LIKE THE RIGGED-UP TENNIS BALL YOU UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE EITHER UP YOUR SLEEVE OR IN THAT BIG BLACK LUNCHBOX OF YOURS, REV.

YES! A LITTLE GREEN BALL THAT BREATHEES!

MR. JENSEN, SIR, THERE'S A LUNCHBOX UNDER THE CHAIR I WAS SITTING IN. GET IT AND OPEN IT AND STAND NEXT TO ME. YOU NEED TO DO NO MORE THAN THAT FOR THE MOMENT. JUST-

SHE'D HAD QUITE ENOUGH, THANK YOU. IN ANOTHER TWENTY MINUTES SHE MIGHT BE CRAWLING AFTER HER HEADLIGHTS ALONG STORMY ROADS TO THE ONLY MOTEL IN THE VICINITY, A PLACE THAT LOOKED LIKE THE AVATAR OF ALL ROACH TRAPS, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER. SHE SIMPLY COULDN'T DO THIS ANY LONGER.

OPEN YOUR EYES, ANDY. OPEN THEM RIGHT NOW. LOOK AT ME.

THIS IS BULLSHIT, ANDY! ARE YOU HEARING ME? BULLSHIT.

I THINK YOU BETTER STOP RIGHT THERE.

LET HER SPEAK, SIR.

IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR JOB, THAT IS. THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHER NURSES IN VERMONT WHO SPECIALIZE IN PAIN THERAPY.

FOR THE LAST SIXTEEN MONTHS - EVER SINCE YOUR RESPIRATORY SYSTEM IMPROVED ENOUGH TO ALLOW MEANINGFUL PHYSIOTHERAPY - I'VE WATCHED YOU LIE IN THIS GODDAMNED EXPENSIVE BED AND INSULT YOUR OWN BODY.

IT MAKES ME SICK.

DO YOU KNOW HOW LUCKY YOU ARE TO BE ALIVE, WHEN EVERYONE ELSE ON THAT AIRPLANE WAS KILLED? WHAT A MIRACLE IT IS THAT YOUR SPINE WASN'T SEVERED OR YOUR SKULL CRUSHED INTO YOUR BRAIN, OR YOUR BODY BURNED—NO, BAKED, BAKED LIKE AN APPLE—FROM HEAD TO TOE?

YOU WOULD HAVE LIVED FOUR DAYS, MAYBE EVEN TWO WEEKS, IN HELLISH AGONY. INSTEAD YOU WERE THROWN CLEAR.

YOU'RE NOT A VEGETABLE. YOU'RE NOT A QUAPRILESC. ALTHOUGH YOU CHOOSE TO ACT LIKE ONE. YOU WON'T DO THE WORK. YOU LOOK FOR SOME EASIER WAY. YOU WANT TO PAY YOUR WAY OUT OF YOUR SITUATION.

IF YOU DIED AND WENT TO HELL, THE FIRST THING YOU'D PO IS LOOK FOR A TOLLGATE.

YOU COULD HAVE BEEN WALKING BY NOW.

GOP KNOWS I'VE TRIED TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, AND GOP KNOWS I'VE TOLD YOU - OVER AND OVER - THE KIND OF WORK IT WOULD TAKE TO GET YOU UP OUT OF THAT BED AND BACK ON YOUR FEET.

PILAWAR IN SAN FRANCISCO HAD THE GUTS TO TELL YOU AND YOU REWARD HIM BY CALLING HIM A FAGGOT.

HE WAS A FAGGOT.

YOU'RE IN PAIN, YES, OF COURSE YOU ARE.

IT'S MANAGEABLE, THOUGH. I'VE SEEN IT MANAGED, NOT ONCE BUT MANY TIMES.

BUT NOT BY A LAZY RICH MAN WHO TRIES TO SUBSTITUTE HIS SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT FOR THE PLAIN OLD HARD WORK AND TEARS IT TAKES TO GET BETTER. YOU REFUSE.

I'VE SEEN THAT, TOO, AND I KNOW WHAT ALWAYS HAPPENS NEXT. THE QUACKS AND CONFRENCE MEN COME, THE WAY LEECHES COME WHEN A MAN WITH A CUT LEG WAPES INTO A STAGNANT POND.

SOMETIMES THE QUACKS HAVE MAGIC CREAMS. SOMETIMES THEY HAVE MAGIC PILLS.

THE HEALERS COME WITH TRUMPED-UP CLAIMS ABOUT GOD'S POWER, THE WAY THIS ONE HAS.

USUALLY THE MARKS GET PARTIAL RELIEF WHY WOULDN'T THEY, WHEN HALF THE PAIN IS IN THEIR HEADS, MANUFACTURED BY LAZY MINDS THAT ONLY UNDERSTAND IT WILL HURT TO GET BETTER?

BUT THE RELIEF NEVER LASTS LONG, BECAUSE THE MUSCLES HAVE NO TONE, THE TENDONS ARE STILL SLACK, THE BONES HAVEN'T THICKENED ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE BEARING WEIGHT.

AND WHEN YOU GET THIS GUY ON THE PHONE TO TELL HIM THE PAIN'S BACK - IF YOU CAN - DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE'LL SAY? THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE FAITH ENOUGH. IF YOU USED YOUR BRAINS ON THIS THE WAY YOU DID ON YOUR MANUFACTURING PLANTS AND VARIOUS INVESTMENTS, YOU'D KNOW THERE'S NO LITTLE LIVING TENNIS BALL SITTING AT THE BASE OF YOUR THROAT.

YOU'RE TOO FUCKING OLD TO BELIEVE IN SANTA CLAUS, ANPY.

YOU'RE RIRER

YES, OF COURSE I AM.

ALTHOUGH I MUST SAY THAT THIS IS THE BEST I'VE FELT IN ALMOST A YEAR.

PON'T FIRE HER.

IF YOU DO, I'LL HAVE TO TAKE MY LEAVE.

SHE NEEDS AN EDUCATION, PRAISE GOD'S HOLY NAME.

SHE'S HAD HER SAY. SHALL I HAVE MINE?

HAVE AT HER, RIPEST. I BELIEVE I WANT TO HEAR THIS.

SO DO I.

YOU'VE NEVER SUFFERED YOURSELF, HAVE YOU MISS?

I FELL OUT OF A TREE WHEN I WAS ELEVEN AND BROKE MY ARM.

BROKE AN ARM WHILE YOU WERE ELEVEN.

YES, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN EXCRUCIATING.

BELITTLE ME ALL YOU WANT. I BASED WHAT I SAID ON YEARS OF EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH PAIN PATIENTS. IT IS A MEDICAL OPINION.

I'M SURE.

AND I'M SURE YOU'RE GOOD AT WHAT YOU DO. I'M SURE YOU'VE SEEN YOUR SHARE OF FAKERS AND POSERS. YOU KNOW THEIR KINR.

AND I KNOW YOURS, MISS, BECAUSE I'VE SEEN IT MANY TIMES BEFORE.

THEY'RE USUALLY NOT AS PRETTY AS YOU BUT, THEIR CONDESCENDING ATTITUDE TOWARD PAIN THEY HAVE NEVER FELT THEMSELVES, PAIN THEY CAN'T EVEN CONCEIVE OF, IS ALWAYS THE SAME.

THEY WORK IN SICKROOMS, THEY WORK WITH PATIENTS WHO ARE IN VARYING DEGREES OF DISTRESS--FROM MILD PAIN TO PEEPEST, SEARING AGONY. AND AFTER A WHILE, IT ALL STARTS TO LOOK EITHER OVERDONE OR OUTRIGHT FAKE TO THEM, ISN'T THAT SO?

THAT'S NOT TRUE AT ALL.

NO?

WHEN YOU BEND THEIR LEGS AND THEY SCREAM AT FIFTEEN DEGREES - OR EVEN AT TEN - PONT' YOU THINK, FIRST IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND, THEN MORE AND MORE TOWARD THE FRONT, THAT THEY ARE LOLLYGAGGING? REFUSING TO DO THE HARD WORK?

PERHAPS EVEN FISHING FOR SYMPATHY?

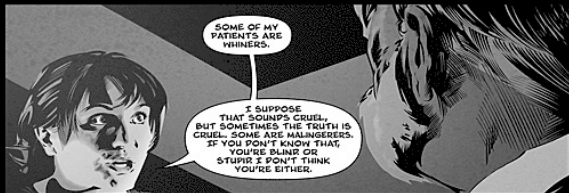
WHEN YOU ENTER THE ROOM AND THEIR FACES GO PALE, PONT' YOU THINK, "OH, NOW I HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS LAZY THING AGAIN?"

HAVEN'T YOU - WHO ONCE FELL FROM A TREE AND BROKE YOUR ARM, FOR THE LORP'S SAKE - BECOME MORE AND MORE DISGUSTED WHEN THEY BEG TO BE PUT BACK INTO BED AND BE GIVEN MORE MORPHINE OR WHATEVER?

ONCE UPON A TIME, WHEN YOU WERE NEW AT THIS, YOU KNEW AGONY WHEN YOU SAW IT.

ONCE UPON A TIME YOU WOULD HAVE BELIEVED IN WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO SEE IN JUST A FEW MINUTES, BECAUSE YOU KNEW IN YOUR HEART THAT MALIGNANT OUTSIDER GOD WAS THERE.

I WANT YOU TO STAY SO I CAN REFRESH YOUR MEMORY... AND THE SENSE OF COMPASSION THAT'S GOTTEN LOST SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY.



SOME OF MY PATIENTS ARE WHINERS.

I SUPPOSE THAT SOUNDS CRUEL, BUT SOMETIMES THE TRUTH IS CRUEL. SOME ARE MALINGERERS. IF YOU DON'T KNOW THAT, YOU'RE BLIND OR STUPID. I DON'T THINK YOU'RE EITHER.



OF COURSE I KNOW. BUT NOW, IN YOUR SECRET HEART, YOU BELIEVE ALL OF THEM ARE MALINGERERS.

YOU'VE BECOME INURED, LIKE A SOLDIER WHO'S SPENT TOO LONG IN BATTLE. MR. NEWSOME HERE HAS BEEN INFESTED, I TELL YOU, INVADER.

THERE'S A DEMON INSIDE HIM SO STRONG IT HAS BECOME A GOD, AND I WANT YOU TO SEE IT WHEN IT COMES OUT. IT WILL IMPROVE MATTERS FOR YOU CONSIDERABLY, I THINK.

CERTAINLY IT WILL CHANGE YOUR OUTLOOK ON PAIN.



CAN SHE STAY, SIR?

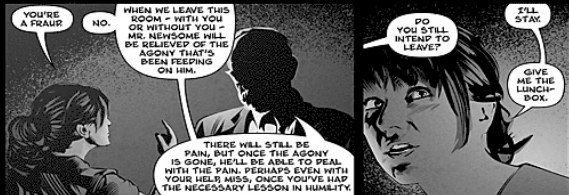
IF YOU WANT HER TO.

AND IF I CHOOSE TO LEAVE?

NO ONE WILL HOLD YOU HERE, MISS NURSE.

LIKE ALL OF GOD'S CREATURES, YOU HAVE FREE WILL. I WOULD NOT ASK OTHERS TO CONSTRAIN IT, OR CONSTRAIN IT MYSELF.

BUT I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE A COWARD, MERELY CALLOUSER CASE-HARDENER.



YOU'RE A FRAUD.

NO.

WHEN WE LEAVE THIS ROOM - WITH YOU OR WITHOUT YOU - MR. NEWSOME WILL BE RELIEVED OF THE AGONY THAT'S BEEN FEEDING ON HIM.

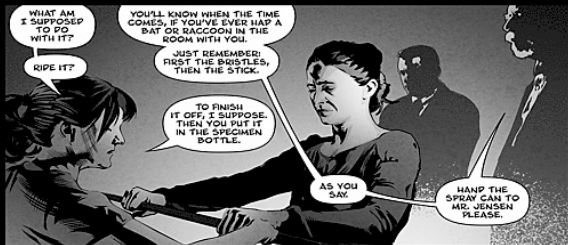
THERE WILL STILL BE PAIN, BUT ONCE THE AGONY IS GONE, HE'LL BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE PAIN. PERHAPS EVEN WITH YOUR HELP, MISS, ONCE YOU'VE HAD THE NECESSARY LESSON IN HUMILITY.

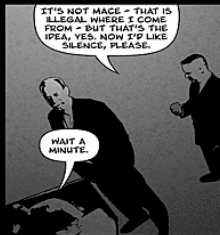
DO YOU STILL INTEND TO LEAVE?

I'LL STAY.

GIVE ME THE LUNCH-BOX.









GOD, THERE IS AN
EVIL OUTSIDER IN
THIS MAN.

AN OUTSIDER FEEDING
ON HIS FLESH AND BONES. HELP
ME CAST IT OUT, AS YOUR SON
CAST OUT THE DEMONS FROM
THE POSSESSED MAN OF
THE CAPARENES.

HELP ME
SPEAK TO THE
LITTLE GREEN
GOD OF AGONY
INSIDE ANDREW
NEWSOME IN YOUR
OWN VOICE OF
COMMAND

COME OUT.
COME OUT IN
THE NAME OF
JESUS.

COME OUT
IN THE NAMES OF
ALL THE SAINTS
AND MARTYRS.

COME OUT IN
THE NAME OF GOD,
WHO GAVE YOU LEAVE
TO ENTER AND NOW
COMMANDS YOU
TO LEAVE.

COME
OUT INTO
THE LIGHT.

LEAVE OFF
YOUR MEAL
AND COME
OUT.

COME OUT IN THE
NAME OF JESUS.
COME OUT IN THE
NAMES OF THE
SAINTS AND
MARTYRS.

NO, DON'T
GO DEEPER. YOU
CAN'T HIDE, THING
OF DARKNESS.
COME OUT INTO
THE LIGHT.

JESUS
COMMANDS YOU.
THE SAINTS AND
MARTYRS COMMAND
YOU. GOD COMMANDS
YOU TO LEAVE
YOUR MEAL AND
COME OUT.

LOOK!



THAT'S
RIGHT.

COME OUT.
COME OUT INTO THE
LIGHT, YOU'VE DONE YOUR
FEELING, THING OF
DARKNESS.



THE GOD
THAT LET YOU IN
COMMANDS YOU
TO LEAVE. JESUS
COMMANDS
YOU TO LEAVE.



ALL THE
SAINTS AND
MARTYRS-

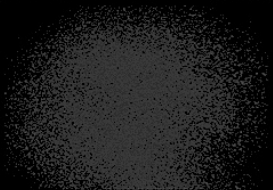


STOP!
HE'S HAVING A
SEIZURE. YOU HAVE
TO ST-



COME OUT!

COME OUT!



SPRAY
IT!

SPRAY IT
BEFORE IT
CAN GET
AWAY!

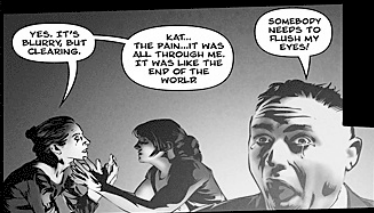






HOLD
STILL!

MELISSA,
HOLD
STILL!



YES. IT'S
BLURRY, BUT
CLEARING.

KAT...
THE PAIN...IT WAS
ALL THROUGH ME.
IT WAS LIKE THE
END OF THE
WORLD.

SOMEBODY
NEEDS TO
FLUSH MY
EYES!



FLUSH YOUR OWN
EYES. YOU'VE
GOT TWO GOOP
LEGS, DON'T
YOU?

I THINK
I MIGHT, TOO.
ONCE KAT
THROWS THEM
BACK INTO
GEAR.

SOMEBODY
CHECK ON RIPEOUT.
I THINK THE POOR
SONOFABITCH MIGHT
BE DEAR



THE PAIN...
KAT, YOU HAVE
NO IDEA OF
THE PAIN.

YES.
ACTUALLY, I
DO. NOW.



IS IT
GONE? KAT, IS
IT GONE?

YES, IT'S
GONE.

I FEEL
BETTER.

CAN YOU
SEE?



HE'S DEAD
I GUESS HIS
PAIN IS
OVER.



FUCK!

I PAID
SEVENTY THOUSAND
DOLLARS FOR THAT
PIECE OF SHIT
GENERATOR.

I NEED
SOMEONE TO
FLUSH MY EYES!
KAT!

KAT?

IT'S ON
THE BACK OF
MY HAND